

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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REPS. MARKEY AND SMITH INTRODUCE BIPARTISAN ALZHEIMER'S RESEARCH BILL

Legislation is House Companion To Senate Bill Introduced by Mikulski, Bond

Washington DC: Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA) and Christopher Smith (R-NJ), the co-chairs of the Bipartisan Congressional Task Force on Alzheimer's Disease, today introduced the Ronald Reagan Alzheimer's Breakthrough Act of 2004. Identical legislation has been introduced in the Senate by Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Senator Kit Bond (R-MO).

"The race to find a cure for Alzheimer's disease is more urgent than ever. Four million Americans, including one in 10 people over age 65 and nearly half of those over 85, have Alzheimer's disease," said Rep. Markey, explaining that, "Unless science finds a way to prevent or cure this terrible illness, 14 million Americans will have Alzheimer's disease by the year 2050."

The Ronald Reagan Alzheimer's Breakthrough Act of 2004 expands the federal government's efforts to find new ways to prevent, treat, and care for patients with Alzheimer's. This bill focuses on enhancing our research efforts by authorizing NIH's Preventive Initiative, which directs NIH to identify possible preventive interventions and conduct clinical trials to test their effectiveness. The bill authorizes significant increase in funding for the Nation Institute on Aging and cooperative clinical research at the National Institute on Aging (NIA) to improve the existing clinical trial infrastructure, develop new ways to design clinical trials, and make it easier for patients to enroll.

The Markey-Smith bill also focuses efforts to help the caregivers of Alzheimer's patients. Presently, care giving comes at enormous physical, emotional, and financial sacrifice. One in eight Alzheimer caregivers becomes ill or injured as a direct result of care giving, and older caregivers are three times more likely to become clinically depressed than other in their age group. Research is needed to find better ways to help caregivers bear this tremendous, at times overwhelming responsibility. The Markey-Smith bill reauthorizes the Alzheimer's Demonstration Grant Program. These grants allow states to provide services like home care, respite care, and day care to patients and families, with Alzheimer's disease.

Rep. Markey concluded, "The best way to fight this disease and reduce the number of patients who suffer from Alzheimer's disease is to find ways to prevent it before starts. Investments we make now in Alzheimer's disease and aging research mean longer, healthier lives for all of us. If we can delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease by even 5 years, it would save this country billions of dollars—and would improve the lives of millions of families. Congress must act now to strengthen the federal commitment to preventive Alzheimer's and to finding a cure for this devastating disease and provide for caregivers."

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